

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,  
Alleluia! Christ is risen.  
Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

This Sunday is the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Easter. Today's gospel begins with two disciples walking to Emmaus, overcome with sadness, loss, and disappointment. They had hoped Jesus, who was crucified, would be the one to redeem Israel! Yet the risen Christ walks with them and then opens their eyes in the breaking of the bread. Each Sunday, regardless of where we are, our hearts burn within us as the scriptures are proclaimed and Christ appears to us.

### **Let Us Be Gathered**

#### **Song**

Easter is always a season to sing, "Hallelujah!" On this third Sunday of Easter, 2020, the Royal Choral Society gathers us together in singing Handel's famous "Hallelujah Chorus." In gathering to sing together virtually, the Royal Choral Society continues a 144-year tradition that was broken only during the blitz of London in 1940 and 1941.

Here is the link: <https://youtu.be/PQYVbd1Gwg>.

Let us pray.

O God,  
your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread.  
Open the eyes of our faith,  
that we may see him in his redeeming work,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.  
Amen.

### **Let Us Hear God's Word**

*A reading from the Psalms:*

- <sup>1</sup>I love the Lord, who has heard my voice,  
and listened to my supplication,  
<sup>2</sup>for the Lord has given ear to me  
whenever I called.  
<sup>3</sup>The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me;  
I came to grief and sorrow.  
<sup>4</sup>Then I called upon the name of the Lord:  
"O Lord, I pray you, save my life."  
<sup>12</sup>How shall I repay the Lord  
for all the good things God has done for me?  
<sup>13</sup>I will lift the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord.  
<sup>14</sup>I will fulfill my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all God's people.  
<sup>15</sup>Precious in your sight, O Lord,  
is the death of your servants.  
<sup>16</sup>O Lord, truly I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.  
<sup>17</sup>I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving  
and call upon the name of the Lord.  
<sup>18</sup>I will fulfill my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all God's people,  
<sup>19</sup>in the courts of the Lord's house,  
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

*A reading from First Peter:*

<sup>17</sup>If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. <sup>18</sup>You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. <sup>20</sup>He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of

the ages for your sake. <sup>21</sup>Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

<sup>22</sup>Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. <sup>23</sup>You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1)

*The Word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.*

*The holy gospel according to Luke.  
Glory to you, O Lord.*

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” <sup>19</sup>He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24)

*The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, O Christ.*

### **Reflection on the Readings**

Today’s psalm speaks of the “cords of death” and the “anguish of the grave.” As we continue each day in practices that are helping to limit the spread of infection and disease, it can certainly still feel as if all the world is now bound by such cords and held in such anguish.

Unlike the disciples at Emmaus, we have rules and practices for health and resilience that we must continue to maintain for a while longer. Those common-sense rules mean that we cannot yet gather together to see the risen Lord in the breaking of the bread of the holy communion. They mean that we cannot yet run to other gatherings of people to tell them what we have seen.

But it goes beyond simply gathering together, doesn’t it? Each day brings news of more infections and deaths from this new disease. At the moment I’m writing, it looks like the official worldwide count of confirmed cases will surpass 3,000,000 by the end of Sunday. Confirmed cases of infection in the United States will be at 1,000,000 no later than Monday. The number of deaths worldwide exceed 200,000 right now. In the United States, the death count is at 53,100. That’s more people than the entire official population of the city of Joplin. There is no doubt it will go well beyond 60,000 during the week ahead.

Such illness and devastation breaks hearts. It is traumatic. It is dreadful. It is discouraging. And it feels like there is little we can do and even less that we can say.

And maybe it was a little like that for those two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Yes, they were talking and discussing with each other. But it seems like that talk wasn’t really going anywhere – their hearts weren’t in it.

But into the midst of such discouragement, God's living Word – Jesus the Christ – arrives and begins to turn things around. The Word of God lights a fire within their hearts. It opens their senses to new possibilities and a new presence. It changes their direction and leads them toward a new way.

As we gather virtually through these email worship devotions, the risen Christ opens to us the word of the scriptures. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we recognize him there in that word. Our hearts, too, begin to burn. We, too, are born anew by his word. We, too, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit by baptism in Christ's name. We, too, will be led in a new direction.

Meanwhile, the risen one stays with us in our homes, is present at our meals, and blesses us in our worst distresses. And in the future we will again "lift the cup of salvation" together as we did in the past. We will again run to tell others. The promise is for us all. A new day will arise!

Alleluia!

### **Hymn of the Day**

Let us join together today in singing, "Day of Arising." This is song #374 in our hymnal if you have a copy at home. The video that leads us is a new recording made just this past week by Lutheran YouTube musician MaryRuth72.

Here is the video link: <https://youtu.be/GpEhhk3FEoU>. (Words to the song are included in the video.)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Separated in our residences but united by God's promises of restoration, we pray for the church, the earth, the world, and all who are in need, echoing today's psalm with the response, "give ear to us."

*A brief silence.*

Come to the church, so burdened by heartache. Give us faith to know your loving presence among us. Open the scriptures to us, and nourish us with the bread of your word. Direct clergy and church leaders through new and difficult tasks. Bind into one denominations around the globe in hope for the renewal of all things, and uphold the work of the World Council of Churches.

*A brief silence.*

O God our merciful Savior, give ear to us.

Come to the earth. Bless all the natural world. Renew landscapes, cleanse the waters, and protect the animals. Save your people especially at this time from destructive storms and floods. Keep viruses in check, for the sake of your beloved humans.

*A brief silence.*

O God our benevolent Gardener, give ear to us.

Come to the nations. Preserve all peoples from war and violence. Guide our governors and our legislators toward wise decisions in struggling against the virus and in reviving the economy. Teach all peoples how to share limited resources with those in greater need. Guide the work of the United Nations during this unprecedented situation.

*A brief silence.*

O God our mighty Peacemaker, give ear to us.

Come to all who suffer from the virus. Comfort the mourners, heal the sick, sustain medical workers. Empower those researchers who are seeking a vaccine. Stay with us, and accompany all those who are isolated or afraid. Give to those with prior ailments and chronic disease their necessary medical care. Especially we pray for those we name here before you, especially Valetta, Paul, Vallie, LaVaune, Patty, Kathy, Frank, Lisa, Rita, April, Bev, Bob, Beth, and Marlene.

*A brief silence.*

O God our compassionate Healer, give ear to us.

As at Emmaus you joined the meal of the disciples, so come also to our tables. Uphold farmers, ranchers, migrant workers, and all who produce, package, and market our food. Guard the health of those who work at grocery stores. Bless the efforts of local food banks. Enable us to feed the children who have relied on food given out at school. Show us how to feed the people living in refugee camps and nations experiencing famine and drought.

*A brief silence.*

O God our generous Provider, give ear to us.

Walk with us on our roadways, whether marked with sorrow or joy, and receive our petitions, both sad lament or fervent praise.

*A longer period of silence.*

O God our beloved Companion, give ear to us.

Accept our praises for those who have died in the faith, including those who stricken with the virus and the medical workers who have died while healing others. Accompany us now, as you did them, until at the end of all things we feast at your table with all the saints in glory.

*A brief silence.*

O God, the Mystery of Life, give ear to us.

With bold confidence in your providence, O holy and gracious God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our saving Lord.

Amen.

### **Let Us Be Sent in Service**

#### **Song**

The song "Alleluia! Jesus is Risen" reminds us in music that Christ is our center, that Christ is risen, and that we, too, shall arise. Let us unite in singing an Augsburg Fortress choral arrangement of this great hymn set to the music of "Earth and All Stars!"

Here is the video link: <https://youtu.be/1TygzRjinL8>.

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

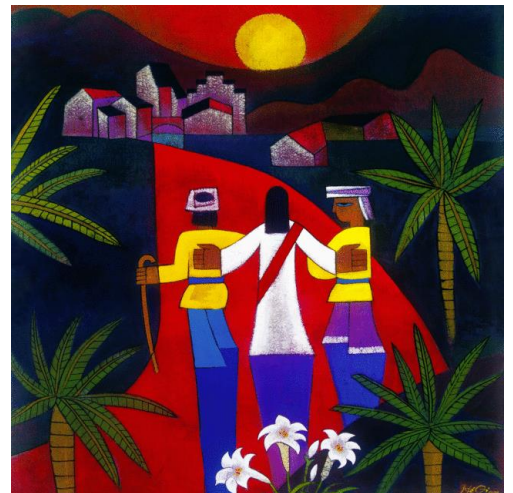
Almighty God, you give us the joy of celebrating our Lord's resurrection. Give us also the joys of life in your service, and bring us at last to the full joy of life eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever.  
Amen.

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The God of all grace ✠ bless us now and forever. Amen.  
Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!



*The Road to Emmaus*  
He Qi, Artist